

formed: seven fighter 'Divisionen'; whenever we actually went into operation, each fighter 'Division' had from thirty to fifty aircraft in the air. That is to say, if two fighter 'Divisionen' both threw in their aircraft together. These raids proved the impossibility of operating according to old principles or to principles which were all right in the East; that is to say to send them up simply on the strength of 'Fluko' reports; a thoroughly reliable ground control had to be developed. I shall skip this development as it would take me too far afield. Finally the defense of the REICH was as follows: the 'Divisionen' who were to put fighters into operation, received detailed reports about enemy raids from 'Korps' and from their own range-finding posts. As soon as the first aircraft took off in ENGLAND and reached a height of 500 m we received the report: "Assembly has started in ENGLAND." Then the assembly was continuously observed until they started to leave, as soon as the assembling of those many hundreds of aircraft, a thing which presents colossal technical difficulties, was completed. Then their flight was followed, to establish where they were going, whether they were heading due East, or North across the NORTH SEA or South-East. From all those items we formed our decisions. The 'Divisionen' for day fighting were able to make use of battle HQs which had already been prepared for the night fighters. Slight alterations were necessary but on the whole this huge apparatus could be used for direction by day too. Then the formations got the take-off order: "Take off at such-and-such an hour." Usually ten minutes or a quarter of an hour before. Assembly-point for instance at the end of 1943 or beginning of 1944 - HANOVER and BRUNSWICK, at a height of 8000 m. Then all the formations flew to that area and assembled at the prescribed height. After assembling, this close formation of 50, 80, 100, 150 aircraft was directed towards the enemy formation until it sighted them. As soon as it sighted the enemy the leader of the formation had the task of organizing the attack in whatever way seemed most favorable. This control was fairly easy as long as there was no fighter escort present. The first attacks, which were carried out without fighter escorts, were easier to combat and were easier for the ground control to direct than they were in later developments. The most famous and widely known was that attack on the ball-bearing factory at SCHWEINFURT, which resulted in the first large victories, which, I believe, were announced as 140 aircraft. 140 aircraft were announced as having been shot down, 67 or 68 were actually found on REICH territory and in the occupied countries i.e. barely half the number announced - and about 300 were reported as having been shot down. How can one explain that? Is it simply the

pilot's dishonesty or are there other reasons? I can assure you that there are other reasons, and one of them is as follows: in an air battle everything happens so tremendously quickly that the whole thing is over in a few seconds. One fellow fires on an aircraft and it catches on fire, in the same instant a second fighter, say further behind on the right, fires at the same aircraft; the pilot sees that it's on fire; still a third fighter comes up and in his excitement doesn't see that it's on fire, open fires on it as well, and suddenly the bomber falls earthwards. Result: three fighters report shooting down an aircraft. In addition to all that: after air battles like those, aircraft always landed all over the place, fighters which took off from MUNICH landed in HOLLAND, on the NORTH SEA coast, or in the industrial area, and there they handed in the reports of their victories at the airfield HQ. In addition to which the pilot rang his home airfield and said "I shot one down." Again a duplicated report. Why? Because the authorities have demanded to know within two hours the exact numbers of aircraft shot down. I know of one single instance only where a 'Divisions-kommandeur' refused to pass on a report, because the 'General' ... was rung up maybe three, four, five times by the REICHSMARSCHALL. "How many aircraft did your fighters shoot down?" and he kept repeating: "I can't say; they haven't arrived back yet; they landed all over the place; if I do tell you, the reports may turn out false."

Why weren't the successes any greater? At that time the 'Defense of the REICH' had already about 250 to 300 fighter aircraft. The long-range-fighter-bomber Geschwader 26, to which I belonged, was then also withdrawn from both the Eastern and Southern fronts and put on to REICH defense. You will have noticed that it never happened either in the East or the South that 50, 80 or 100 of our aircraft flew in a body and carried out any major operation. In RUSSIA they flew in 'Rotten' of two or 'Schwarme' of four. The fighters, that is. What were the long range fighter-bombers doing? They had been dropping bombs and had thereby lost all feeling for flying as fighters, and now, thanks to a situation forced on us by the enemy, thanks to the huge formations in which they fly in and which in turn can only be attacked with huge formations, our fighter arm suddenly had to conduct the fight in a strength to which it was never accustomed. The few who could have done it right from the beginning of the war were no longer there, they had already been killed. As a result only individual dog-fights developed in all those raids. An enormous number of us arrived, a crew of 30, 50 sometimes 60 aircraft, but each pilot simply attacked wildly at random. Result: Each of them was shot down wildly at random. The long-range-fighter-

bombers and the Fw 190 then received, in addition to their other armament, the so-called 'mortar-shell' 21 cm, the one you know from the 'Nebelwerfer'. That would have been a marvelous thing had we had the necessary sights for it. Two such 'mortar howitzers' were built into each wing of the '110' for instance, making four mortars in all; the fuze was ... at 1000 or 1200m. it kept changing during this experimental stage. Some very good successes were actually scored with it; my predecessor shot down two four-engined aircraft with one round from it. Their fuselages simply broke in half and the two huge things plunged earthwards. But, taking it all round, one had to say that successes due to the 'mortar-shell' were infinitesimal, in fact so few that it was withdrawn again. I had no instrument in the aircraft for calculating exactly how far away I was from the enemy aircraft. The only means I had was that so-called 'Reflex' sight. That's an illuminated circle with a graticule in it, there's a target ... in it, rather similar to a telescopic sight, and I know that when the Boeing takes up a third of the diameter I am 1000 m away from it. But it's impossible to say whether it's exactly 1000 m or 1100 m or 900 m. That's why it kept occurring that people fired at too great a range: especially the inexperienced crews were always afraid of those huge aircraft which already had so many victories to their credit, so they didn't wait to open fire at 1000 m but fired at 1500 m, 2000 m and 2500 m. The 'mortar-shell' also had a bad effect on the pilots; they wouldn't close in any more but remained at a distance at which it was impossible to engage in combat. That's why, having introduced that 'mortar-shell' in the Autumn of 1943, they started to remove the thing again at the beginning of 1944, and rightly so, as I had to admit afterwards, although I was all for it in the beginning.

After that lack of success a strongly-worded order was received from the REICHSMARSCHALL in which he again reminded fighter pilots of their duty to protect the FATHERLAND, to get to close grips with and shoot down the enemy, and ordered that the attack be delivered from behind and that fire must not be opened until the range had closed to 400 m. If one can get to within that distance, there's a lot of point in what he said, but we have already seen that the probability of attaining that range was extremely small. That was because it's also harder to shoot down an aircraft from the front. Naturally, the inexperienced crews had little success when they started attacking from the front and only after half a dozen operations did they find out how it should be done and really record some successes. For these reasons, there were the strictest orders that the attack must come from the rear and anyone who didn't comply was court-martialed. Re-